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[Warren, O.]

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POLITICAL EQUALITY LEAFLETS

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Women's Vote In Australia

Prof. R. E. Macnaghten of McGill University, Montreal, who lived for some years in Australasia, contributes to the Canadian Magazine for June, 1907, "A Plea for Woman Suffrage in Canada." He says in part:

"That the extension of the franchise to women has been a real succcess in Australia can hardly be disputed by any unprejudiced person; and sufficient time has passed since its introduction to enable us to take a broad and dispassionate view. Ninety per cent. of the men of Australia, to whichever of the great popular parties they might belong, would, I believe, agree that the concession of the vote to women had been a real benefit to the state.

"It is sometimes said that women do not want the vote. What has happened in Australia since the granting of female franchise is a striking disproof of that assertion. Before it was granted, there was no very manifest or outspoken indication of such a desire. But that women since have shown the full-

est and most intelligent appreciation of their privileges, will hardly be denied by anyone conversant with the actual facts. In the towns women vote, if anything, in greater proportional numbers than men. In the country, owing to the long distances to be traversed, the case is somewhat different though even here, so far as the villages are concerned, the women are exhibiting remarkable political acumen. And not only are women, by going in great numbers to the polls, showing that they fully appreciate the privilege, but they are also introducing new and more scientific methods into political and electoral organization."

The professor mentions that, whereas it had been the custom for each candidate to address meetings of his own party only, the women's organizations have brought in the innovation of getting the candidates of all the parties to come and address them, so that they may weigh and compare their views. Prof. Macnaghten continues:

"This indeed appears to me a distinctive and salutary characteristic of the women's vote, that it above all things endeavors to ascertain and act on the merits of the case. And this point has attracted the attention of a recent writer in New South Wales, whose words I may quote: 'The lines in which the women's influence is to be especially felt are gradually becoming clear. They have very largely declared themselves against privilege, against monopolies of all kinds, against the raising of the cost of living, in favor of individual liberty, in favor of temperance, moral and physical cleanliness, and all that goes to build up a great national character.'

"However incapable we may be of specifying the exact causes, most men will admit that the presence of a woman in the house makes all the difference between comfort and misery, and that the 'sweetness and light' of family life contrast in the most striking manner with the squalor of a bachelor's den. And the same subtle and almost indescribable element which pervades domestic life through the presence of woman, does also assuredly make its influence felt when women take part in the political life of a nation,"

Prof. Macnaghten says that one great advantage of equal suffrage is the introduction of a class with leisure. "Of all busy men, the wealthy man of affairs is the busiest. But his wife and daughters have leisure in superabundance. By such women as these, and by the wives and daughters of thousands of business and professional men, the time necessary for the proper study of political and social questions can be easily given; and the opportunity of useful work often proves extremely acceptable. If men be more fitted for the adjustment of purely political questions (and this after all remains to be proved), it is hardly questionable that

women are peculiarly fitted to deal with all those social-political problems with which some question of domestic economy is in any way concerned, such as poor-law economy, hospital organization, the housing of the working classes, and all those educational matters in which the problems of the household are reproduced on a larger scale.

"Moreover, for the consideration of all such problems women have one great advantage, in that they do not by predisposition attach the same importance to precedent and form. Even the ablest men are inclined to bow down and worship before the altar of red tape; and this routine tendency in the case of the average male often produces the most deplorable results. A striking concrete illustration of the inherent difference between the sexes in this regard is afforded by the advent of Florence Nightingale in the Crimean war." Prof. Macnaghten tells how the wounded were perishing for stores which could not be issued without an official order, and how Florence Nightingale had the doors broken open and the stores distributed.

Prof. Macnaghten enumerates other benefits that have followed from equal suffrage in Australia, and in conclusion, that the strongest argument for it is the greatly increased power that it gives to "the family vote" over that of a comparatively irresponsible and floating population.

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